Read, the Left Book Club unfounded, and the *Bible to be Read as Literature* unpublished.

Newspapers have their obituaries ready filed. We regret, or, in the case of important persons, deeply regret to announce the death of So-and-so, still breathing, ambitious, with money and passion left to expend.[2] These obituaries require periodical revision: he who once deserved a column and a half, later only deserving perhaps three-quarters of a column; he whose imagined death was once an occasion for reflections in a *de mortuis nil nisi bonurn* strain, later becoming an irreplaceable loss to his country; this one's reputation having grown up so suddenly that no provision has been made for recording his demise.

In ten years reputations greatly fluctuate, and much obituary revision is necessary, apart from the inevitable weeding out—'Died on such a date', scrawled across used obituaries, yet these also kept a little while in the unlikely event of curiosity about the already dead and buried requiring to be satisfied.

Ten years ago, as a Cabinet Minister in office and a trade union official, Mr. J. H. Thomas would have been entitled to at least three-quarters of a column (* . . . genial disposition made him popular with opponents as well as colleagues . . . hard-hitter but . . . notable talent as a negotiator . . /), and probably a photograph. Then, after the formation of the National Government, this three-quarters of a column would have grown into a column, and perhaps a little more (*... stood loyally by the Prime Minister — excellent work at the Dominions Office . . . when the bitterness of present political controversy has died

down it will be seen that . . .*). Rumours of his impending resignation would have led to a certain shrinkage, length being reduced by the excision of some of the warmer commendatory phrases; and for a few months after the publication of the findings of the

[2] Lord Alfred Douglas is one of the few who have been given an opportunity of reading the published version of their own obituaries. In 1921 the *Evening News,* acting on a false report of Lord Alfred's death, published his obituary, thereby, incidentally, providing grounds for a libel action which resulted in Lord Alfred being awarded ^1,000 damages,